

## **Homes for Islington**

### **Inspection of Refurbishment Works**

**to**

### **Street Properties in the Islington PFI 1 Contract**

FEBRUARY 2005 – JUNE 2005

REPORT 2

**Consul ref: 556/04/PFI**

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## **Inspection of Refurbishment Work to Street Properties in the Islington PFI 1 Contract**

**June 2005**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Consul Chartered Surveyors are independent consultants employed by Homes for Islington to inspect and report upon refurbishment works undertaken by United House as part of the above Private Finance Initiative contract.

Partners for Improvement in Islington is a consortium of private companies that is responsible for the refurbishment, management and ongoing maintenance of 1735 tenanted and 610 leasehold pre-1919 street properties owned by Islington Council. United House Ltd is the contractor responsible for the refurbishment of these properties by 2008.

The 30-year PFI contract between Partners and Islington Council began in May 2003. Homes for Islington (HFI), the arms-length management organisation of the council, manages the council's housing and acts for the council on the PFI contract.

Following inspections by Consul at properties between November 2004 and January 2005, it was clear that there was cause for serious concern relating to:

- Quality of finished works
- Health and Safety on site
- Care and protection of residents' property
- Duration/ programme of works
- Respect towards residents
- Communication

In December 2004, at the request of HFI, United House introduced an action plan to remedy the problems that had been highlighted in complaints by residents and supported by a report provided by Consul Chartered Surveyors in January 2005.

Further to the release of this report and subsequent meetings between all parties involved, HFI instructed Consul Chartered Surveyors to undertake further inspections of a sample of properties where refurbishment work had started in or after January 2005 to assess improvements made by United House since the implementation of their action plan.

Partner's asset managers are responsible for ensuring that properties meet the required Availability Standard set out in the contract. As part of this quality control, Partners inspect a percentage of completed units and pass or fail each property depending on whether it meets this standard. Since February 2005 Partners have inspected 100% of properties.

Properties are snagged by UH prior to handover as an additional quality control measure.

Consul Chartered Surveyors were invited to be present at a number of these inspections by Partners, United house were also present at this time.

### **Inspections at Handover**

9 properties from the orange, blue and yellow zones were completed and inspected between January and April 2005 and passed or failed Availability Standards by Partners at the time of the inspections.

### **Inspections of completed properties**

As part of this report, Consul Chartered Surveyors arranged inspections with residents of properties that were opened and completed between January and June 2005; these units had all been certified to Interim or Full Availability Standard.

The 12 properties were taken at random from the 5 work zones and lists provided by both Partners and United House and inspected with the tenant in attendance:

### **Rectification of defects**

13 properties from 4 zones that took part in the previous phase of inspections were contacted to assess extent and quality of rectification works.

## **2.0 Handover Inspections**

### **2.1 Property 1**

This is a void property and has been fully refurbished.

Although this unit was finished to a high standard it did fail the availability standard on the following points:

- Handrail missing from front steps.
- Loose internal handrail.
- Excessive penetrating damp in rear bedroom.
- Cracked glazing.

### **2.2 Property 2.**

Although the quality of works appeared to be generally reasonable, the resident was very unhappy about a number of issues relating to the refurbishment:

- Damp at basement level was not discovered until the property was decorated, delaying works.
- Kitchen door was damaged when ceiling was replaced, replacement door does not match existing size or type, but Partners state that this is a Fire check door.
- Skirting and coving damaged during works.
- Carpets damaged by plaster, dust etc.
- Chimney pot damaged when installing flue lining, tenant then told that she had to buy an electric fire rather than replacing gas fire. These comments are under discussion with UH for further clarification.
- Timescale and programme of works.

### 2.3 Property 3.

This property was selected to inspect by Partners, it failed the availability standard on a number of items and the quality of work was extremely poor; in more detail:

- Radiator in lounge leaking.
- Very untidy wall surfaces throughout, chases not made good, walls not ready to receive decorations.
- Access panel in lounge floor not securely fixed.
- Architraves, skirting etc untidy and/or missing.
- Stairs unsafe with loose treads.
- Windows not properly refurbished, several requiring replacement. Partners are seeking further information on this.
- Penetrating damp on rear wall due to leaking hopper head.
- Rear elevation wall bowing. This issue is under further discussion with Partners

### 2.4 Property 4.

These flats were all finished to an acceptable standard but did not meet availability standard on the following points:

- There was not a radiator in each room (omitted from hallways). These comments are under further discussion with Partners.
- Thermostats and non-TRV radiators were placed in living rooms; this prevents the heating system being controlled effectively.
- Replacement glazing below 1100 mm was standard rather than safety glass.

Additionally, wall tiling and silicone mastic around floors, baths etc was seen to be fairly untidy.

The tenants of 32f indicated that they were pleased with the quality of work, communication from UH and timescales.

### 2.5 Property 5.

This property passed the full availability standard and was finished to a reasonable standard, again wall tiling and mastic was found to be slightly untidy.

The tenant appeared to be happy with the works team.

### 2.6 Property 6.

This property failed availability standard as there was no over-run on the bathroom extractor fan.

The property passed all other aspects of the availability standard and was finished to a reasonable standard. It was also noted that there appeared to be plenty of protection for flooring, furniture etc.

## 2.7 Summary

Generally these properties were finished to a reasonably high standard. Recurring issues include: untidy tiling and mastic, damp, inadequate heating controls , no over-run on bathroom fans and untidy making good around electrical outlets.

There were no apparent problems with the standard of kitchens and bathrooms or electrical installation. External decorations were generally reasonable with the exception of minor over-painting on brickwork.

The handover procedure has improved since the implementation of United House's Action Plan; there is now a member of staff who pre-snags each property before it is inspected by the zone manager to ensure there are no outstanding defects that would cause an Availability Standard fail, the zone manager then refers the property to Partners' Asset Manager for certification.

Only one of these units, however, was certified by Partners as meeting the Availability Standard at the time of the inspections.

### **3.0 Inspections of completed properties**

As part of the report, Consul Chartered Surveyors visited a number of completed properties by appointment with tenants; the inspections followed the same format as the initial report.

Unless stated in the report 'tenant commented that' or 'tenant unhappy with' or where a reference is made to problems during works, previous leaks etc, all comments are based on observations made during inspections, for example, windows were tested to check if operable and correctly weighted.

All these properties had passed Partners' availability standards at the time of the inspections.

Tenants were asked to give a score between 1 and 10 for: quality of works, management, courtesy, communication and cleanliness etc and were asked to answer yes or no as to whether dust sheets were used etc.

Graphs included are based solely on the results of average scores from these questionnaires. A sample questionnaire is included in the appendix

The properties were then inspected to assess the quality of the finished product. Observations were made in consideration of availability standard, snagging issues, health and safety and statutory requirements.

Photographs showing the issues raised are included in the appendix.

These inspections do give an unbiased indication of residents' attitudes towards the works team as well as their views of Partners and the project as a whole.

#### **3.1 Property 1.**

The tenant of this property moved in once the works were complete.

With the exception of a couple of minor points (untidy filling around sockets and an initial radiator leak) the property was finished to a reasonably high standard and the tenant was happy.

Duration of Works

- Approx 6 weeks

Tenant's Overall Score

- 7/10

#### **3.2 Property 2.**

Again, this property was finished to a reasonably high standard and the tenant was happy. There were a few minor points to be highlighted:

- Bathroom tap leaked and flooded floor.
- Bathroom window does not open.
- No mastic seal between sink and work surface. This comment is under further discussion with Partners

The external and communal parts were finished to an excellent standard.

Duration of Works

- 8 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 8/10.

### **3.3 Property 3.**

The tenant of this property gave very high scores for all aspects of the project and with the exception of a few minor points the works were to a good standard.

Making good of plaster around a number of electrical fittings was untidy, a light pendant was loose, the bathroom tiling and grouting was found to be messy and there was no mains water stop-cock in the property. The latter point is under further discussion with Partners.

There was slight damaged caused to the cooker and fridge alleged to have been caused by the works team.

Duration of Works

- 7 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 9/10.

### **3.4 Property 4.**

This tenant was extremely pleased with the project, especially the Gilmac works team.

There were several issues with the works:

- No wash hand basin provided in WC. This issue is subject to further discussion with Partners
- Window in bedroom not fully operational, sash cord jams.
- Slight damage to fridge allegedly caused during works.

Duration of Works

- 10 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 9/10.

### **3.5 Property 5.**

The refurbishment of this property would be considered to be below an acceptable standard with a number of issues relating to standard of works:

- Making good of plaster to walls and ceilings very poor in places.
- There is evidence of penetrating damp in rear bedroom, no obvious remedial works carried out.
- Bathroom tiling very poor; tiles not level.
- WC flush handle loose.

Duration of Works

- 8 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 7/10.

### **3.6 Property 6.**

The tenant here was very unhappy with the refurbishment; she gave very low scores for communication, time-keeping, tidiness and standard of finish.

There were several issues observed relating to quality of works:

- Evidence of penetrating damp in bathroom, probably from leaking gutter.
- No silicone mastic provided to parts of kitchen floor.
- Kitchen sink not adequately fixed or sealed, water ponding on drainer.
- Gaps between sockets and tiles.
- Tenant unhappy with works to remedy leaking drainage in bathroom floor.
- No window lock key provided.

Duration of Works

- 5 months.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 1/10

### **3.7 Property 7.**

The standard work here was reasonable, although there were a number of minor issues observed during the inspection:

- The thermostat is positioned in the lounge which reduces the effectiveness of the heating system. This issue is subject to further discussion with Partners.
- Plaster finish in kitchen below an acceptable standard.
- Wiring for boiler not chased into wall.
- Tenant stated that there are problems with hot water system.
- Tiling generally sub-standard.
- Socket in bedroom not straight.
- Light switch in corner of room; awkward to reach from door.

Duration of Works

- 5 months.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 9/10

### **3.8 Property 8.**

This property was refurbished to a high standard and the resident was extremely pleased with the entire project.

Patch repairs to render at rear was slightly untidy and one light pendant was not flush with ceiling.

Duration of Works

- 11 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 10/10

### **3.9 Property 9.**

Again the tenant was pleased with the project and the quality of works was found to be to an acceptable standard.

Minor issues observed were: earth bonding was not provided to bathroom radiator, extractor fan failed to work (was working when installed) and slightly untidy tiling.

Duration of Works

- 5 months.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 10/10.

### **3.10 Property10.**

This tenant is reasonably pleased with the works to the flat but made serious complaints about the site office in the ground floor flat, more specifically the conduct of the workers (swearing etc), noise and security. As a result she rated communication, tidiness and complaints procedure very poorly.

The tenant was very unhappy that she has had no response from Partners after complaining several times. Response sent to letter from resident in accordance with Partners procedures

There were a number of works quality issues noted at this property:

- Vinyl flooring slightly damaged.
- Mastic and joint in vinyl floor untidy.
- Switches in kitchen not level.
- Earth bonding in bathroom clipped to skirting rather than under floor.

Duration of Works

- 4 months.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 5/10.

### **3.11 Property 11.**

Again there were minor issues relating to quality of works such as untidy tiling, electrical fittings and plaster repairs.

The tenant commented that her furniture and carpets were not adequately protected during works and she replaced vinyl flooring due to protruding nails.

Duration of Works

- 5 months.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 5/10.

### 3.12 Property 12

The tenant had a number of issues relating to the works:

- TLO was unhelpful and inadequately trained.
- Fridge was damaged during works and no compensation given.
- Given very short notice before works began.

There were a few quality issues noted during the inspection:

- Paint and plaster dripped on skirting boards.
- Light fitting not properly fitted.
- Emulsion paint cracking under kitchen window.
- Bathroom and bedroom windows very stiff.
- Generally untidy electrical fittings.

Duration of Works

- 8 weeks.

Tenant's Overall Score

- 7/10.

### 3.13 Summary

From this sample of properties it is clear that there have been improvements made in the quality of works and the overall management of the project.

On the whole, residents appeared to be pleased with the outcome of the works; the results of the questionnaire are included in this report and show an overall satisfaction score of 73%, compared to 37% in the initial report.

In the main, issues raised during these inspections do not give rise to Health & Safety concerns. Some of these issues are under further discussion with Partners.

- Inoperable sash windows.
- Inadequate making good of surfaces following re-wires.
- Pipe-work not boxed.
- Untidy tiling and silicone mastic in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Omission of wash hand basin in WC
- Electrical fittings not properly installed.
- Evidence of damp not remedied.
- Slight damage to furniture, white goods and floor coverings.
- Over-running works.
- Lack of information provided to tenants.

Certain of these issues, however would cause a fail of availability standards; in particular: inoperable sash windows, damp and omission of wash hand basins.

#### **4.0 Rectification of Defects**

In order to establish the extent to which the works team have rectified defects detailed in the previous report, Consul Chartered Surveyors contacted tenants that took part in the initial inspections where works were incomplete or in need of rectification.

As highlighted in the previous report, there were serious defects found within many of these properties. A large proportion of these fall below the availability criteria and do not meet Government Decent Homes Standards.

It should also be noted that a number of works do not comply with current Building Regulations and give rise to Health & Safety concerns (e.g. loose wiring, protruding nail heads etc.). With this in mind, the urgency to remedy these defects should be obvious.

It was possible to contact 13 of these residents and the findings were as follows:

#### **4.1 Property 1**

At the time of the call United House had not been in touch with this tenant regarding further works to the property. The tenant had received a letter regarding compensation from Partners.

There are still pieces of scaffolding in the rear garden. The central heating boiler failed and the tenant was told by the heating engineer that the fault was due to an incorrect pump being fitted.

The tenant was obviously very upset and angry about the works team.

#### **4.2 Property 2.**

United House are now in the process of rectifying and completing this property after contact from the tenant.

Tenant is happy with latest works.

#### **4.3 Property 3.**

No contact from United House despite many outstanding issues.

Tenant still very unhappy.

#### **4.4 Property 4.**

Tenant has now received compensation for damage to cabinet during works but has had no contact from UH concerning further works.

There are still outstanding issues such as a leaking boiler flue and workers replacing a new vacuum for old.

#### **4.5 Property 5.**

No contact from UH about rectification works, still issues outstanding. Exterior works have still not been undertaken; now 12 months since initial works commenced.

Still awaiting a response to a compensation claim relating to damage to the burglar alarm.

#### **4.6 Property 6.**

Works have still not begun in communal hallway, area remains very untidy from re-wire etc. Leaseholder has contested charge because a lower figure was agreed in August 2004.

Tenant has not been contacted in relation to further works. Damp penetrating in kitchen where external brickwork was not made good when boiler flue was removed.

Tenant is unhappy that property was officially handed over without her signature. Also has had no response from written complaints.

#### **4.7 Property 7.**

No contact apart from letter regarding compensation for over-running works.

#### **4.8 Property 8.**

No contact about further rectification works. Communal parts still not made good from re-wire or decorated. Tenant has health and safety concerns.

Tenant awaiting response about compensation for damage to light fittings.

Very unhappy that the property was never signed off or snagged.

#### **4.9 Property 9.**

Contractor has returned but tenant very unhappy at the quality of works.

Contractor has not returned keys to tenant.

#### **4.10 Property 10.**

Tenant has had no response from works team regarding rectification of defects despite a number of calls to Partners.

Still awaiting compensation for damaged kitchen goods.

#### **4.11 Property 11.**

Again, there has been no response from works team about rectifying defects/ Completing works.

Tenant has on-going problems with defective boiler.

#### **4.12 Property 12.**

Tenant has had no response from UH despite many outstanding issues and numerous attempts to contact.

#### **4.13 Property 13.**

As above.

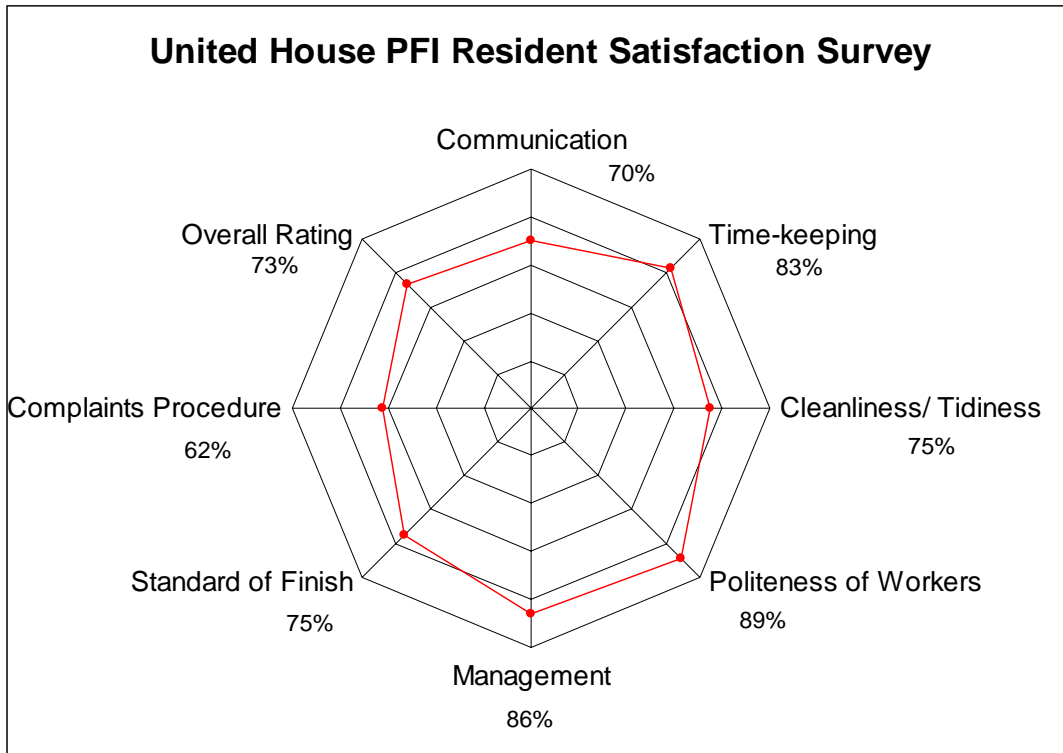
#### **4.14 Summary**

United House have returned to 3 of 13 properties to make good defects/ complete works highlighted in February's report.

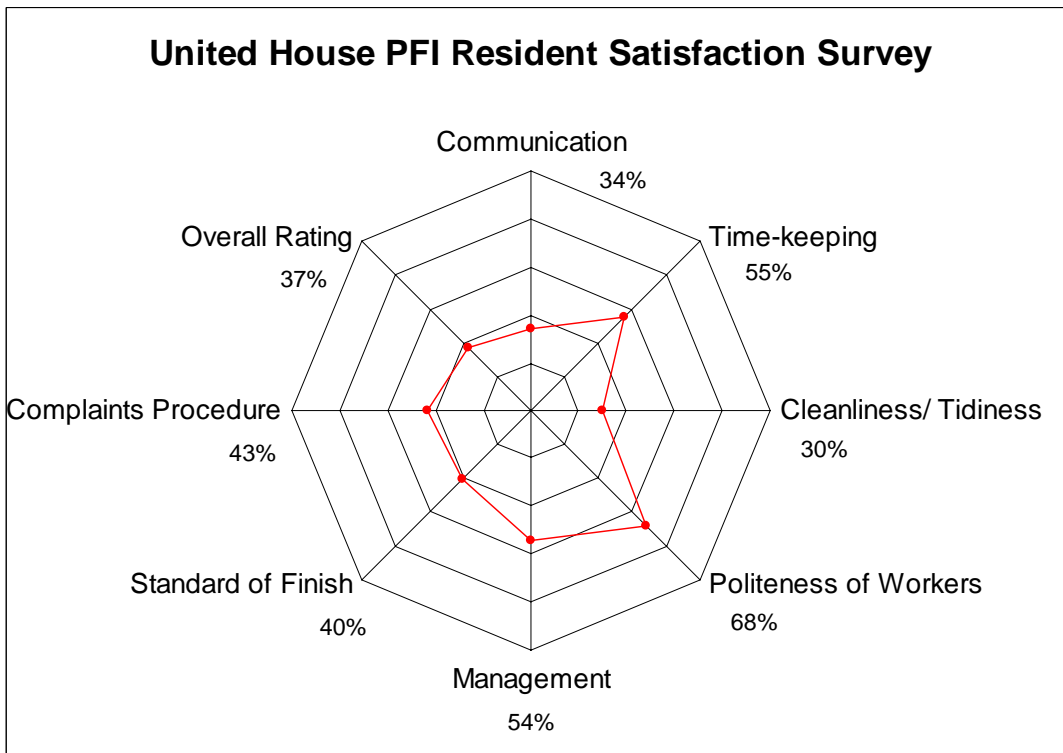
A large proportion of the tenants that were contacted were still very unhappy with the works team; many suggesting that they would rather not have had the works done at all. A number of tenants have rectified defects themselves and have said that, if contacted, they would not allow works team into the property again.

**5.0 Graphs**

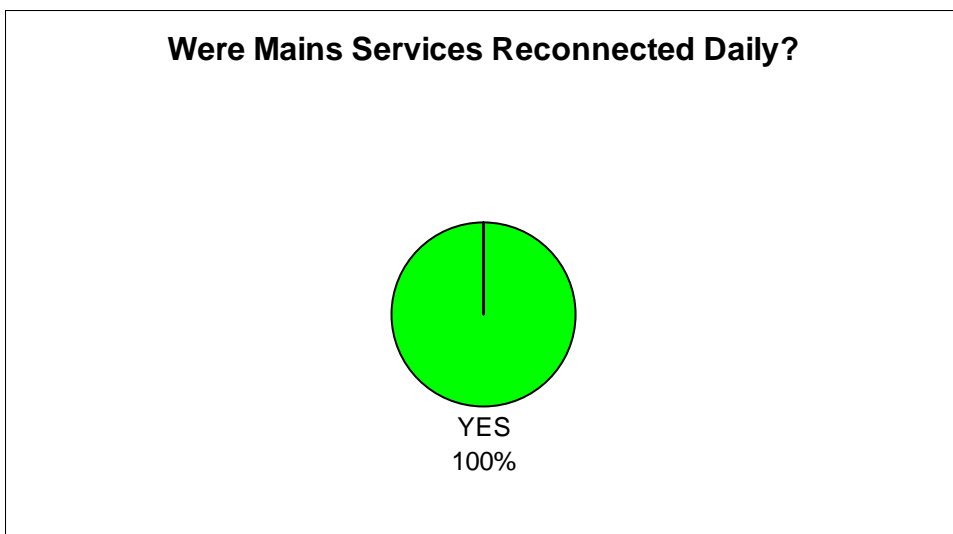
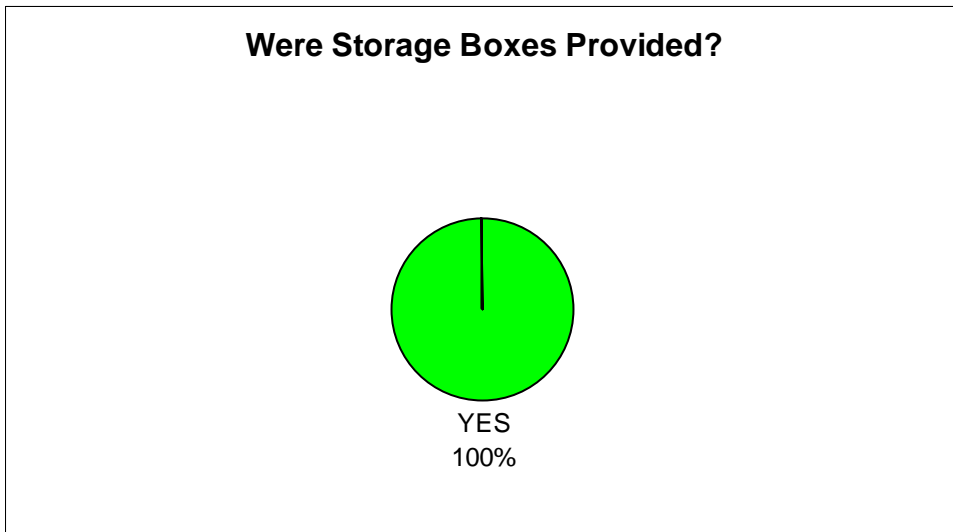
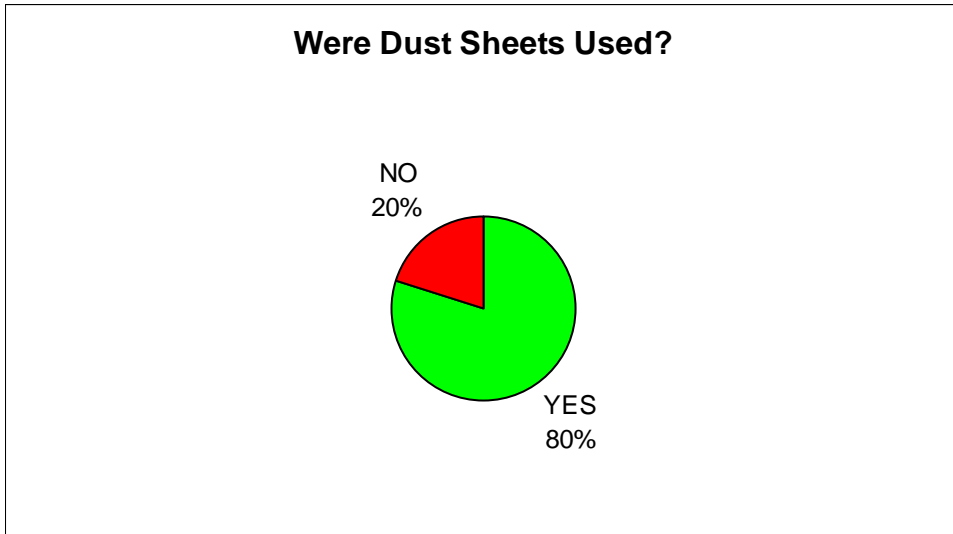
**February - June 2005**



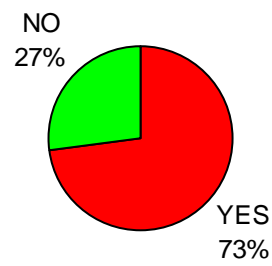
**November 2004- January 2005**



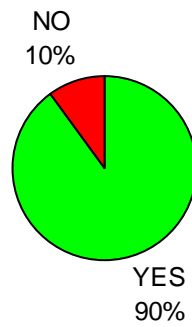
**February - June 2005**



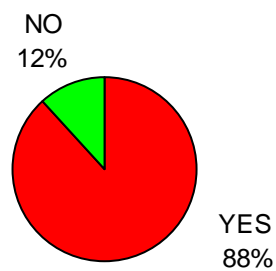
### Did United House Workers Cause any Damage?

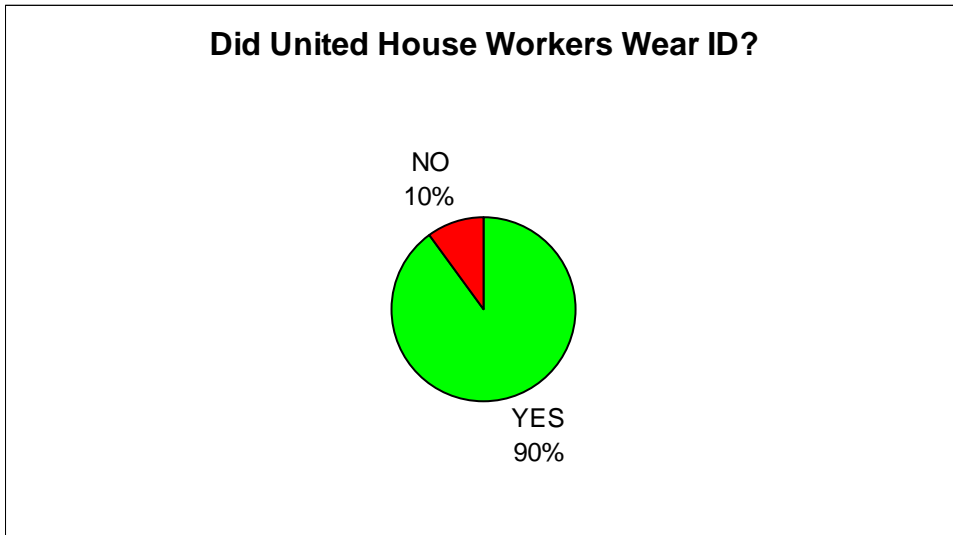


### Was Property Always Secure?

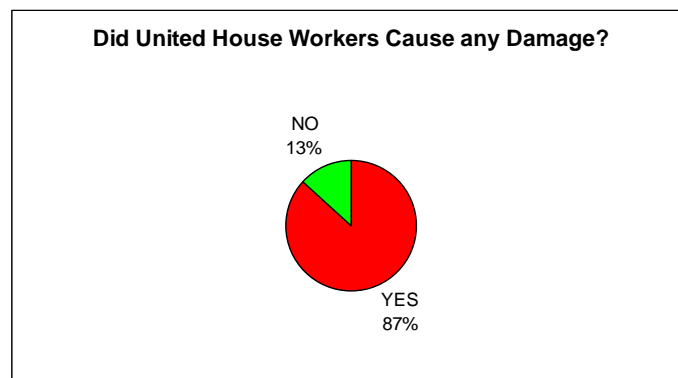
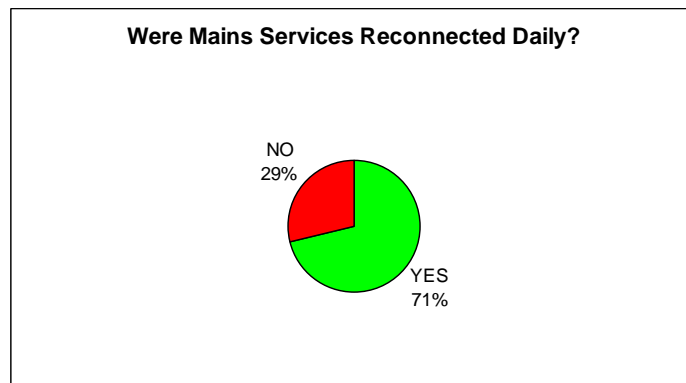
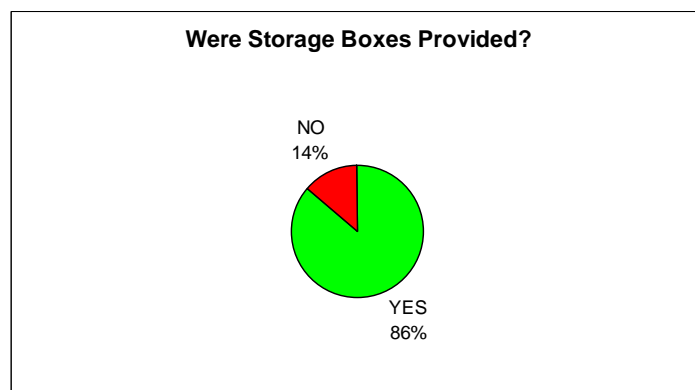
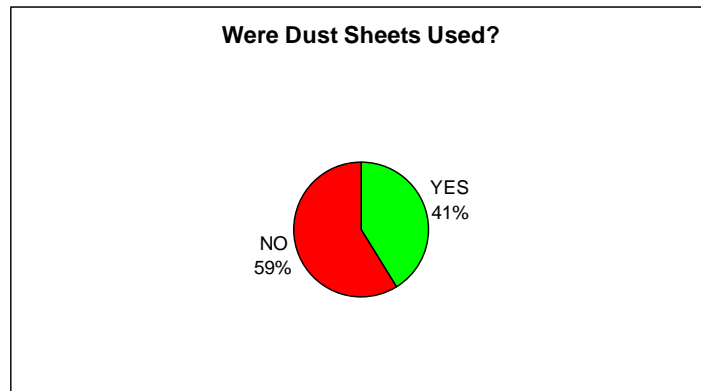


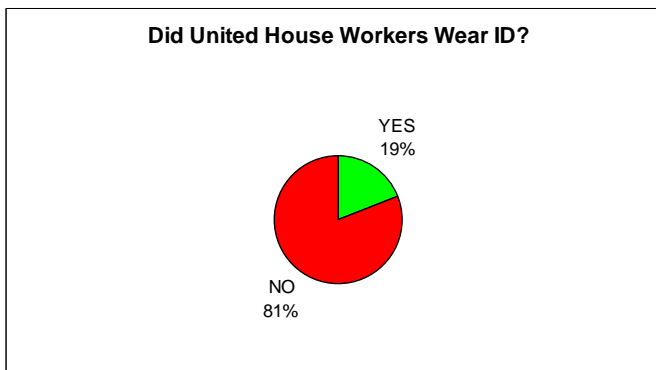
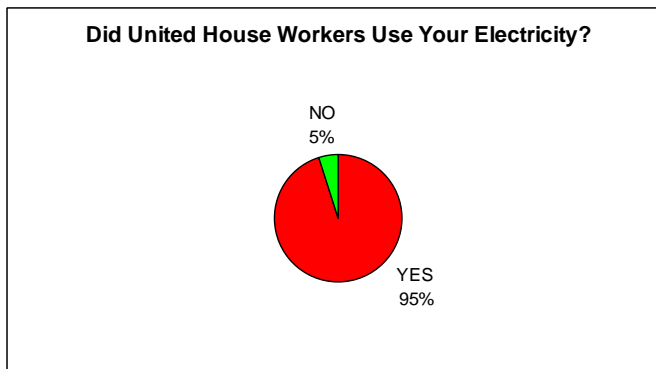
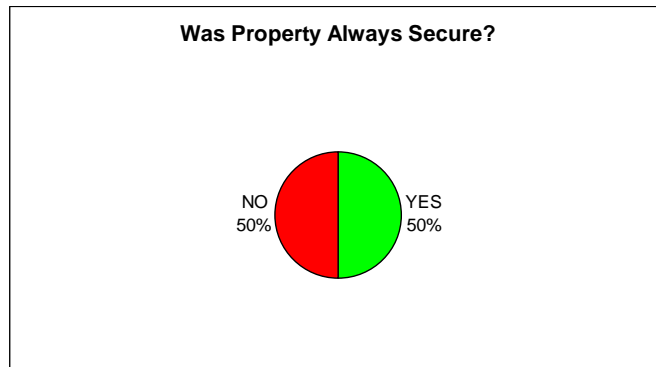
### Did United House Workers Use Your Electricity?





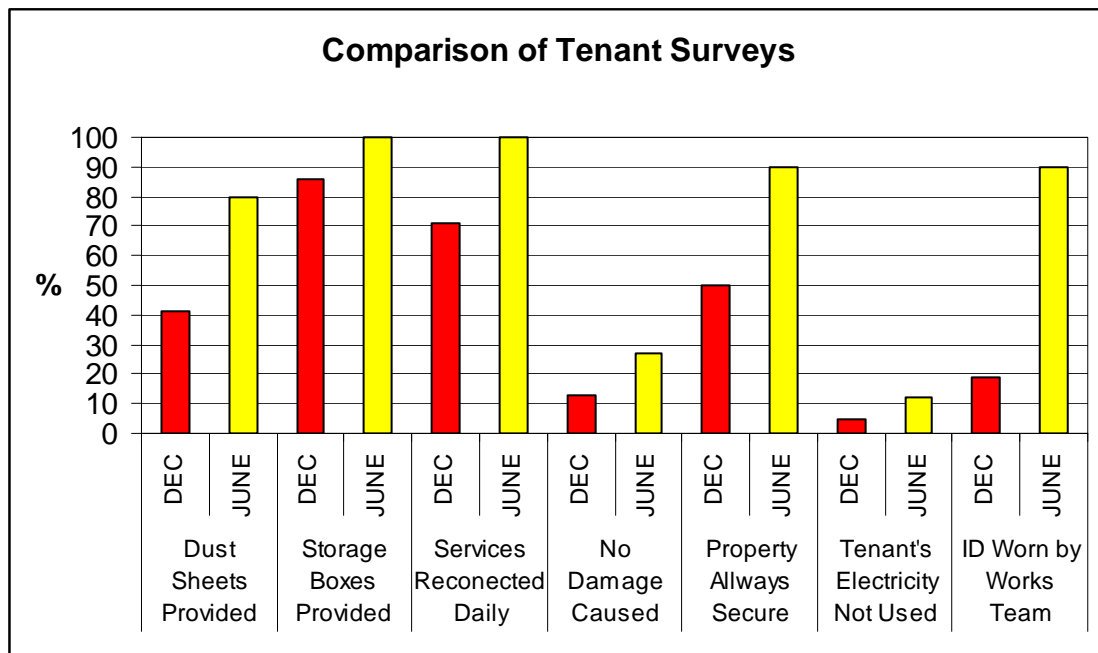
**November 2004- January 2005**





### 6.0 Comparison of Tenant Surveys

The chart below compares the results of tenant surveys done for this report and the first report by Consul published in January 2005.



The chart clearly demonstrates an improvement in tenants' experiences of the works since the implementation of United House's Action Plan in January 2005.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

### **7.1 Communication**

From the limited contact with residents, it appears that the works team have improved communication between management, sub-contractors and tenants. Residents seem to be much clearer about the programme of works and timescales involved.

There were no issues with workers failing to keep appointments or tenants being unaware of works taking place.

### **7.2 Quality of Works**

There are still issues regarding quality of works; these, however, tend to be snagging items as detailed in the main report and summarised below rather than major Health & Safety concerns or Availability Standard issues.

Sash windows are not properly eased and often do not open. Electrical installation is often poorly finished with wires not chased into plaster, walls and ceilings not always made good, gaps around outlets, sockets at incorrect height. Tenants have complained that extractor fans are too noisy.

There are still instances of damage to tenants' furniture, carpets and white goods in addition to coving, architrave, doors etc.

There are instances where wash hand basins have not been provided in WCs, which would cause an Availability Standard failure.

Bathrooms and kitchens are generally reasonable, although some kitchen doors were not properly aligned; also tiling and silicone mastic tends to be untidy.

It is clear that quality of works has improved since the first phase of inspections. This is probably as a consequence of a management restructure; there is now a site manager and site supervisor for each of the four zones; two of these managers play a senior role and supervise another zone.

There is a staff member who is responsible for snagging and quality control. United House have also made changes to middle and upper management since the New Year.

It was also noted that United House seem to have built steady relationships with several sub-contractors, which has caused improved consistency and reliability.

### **7.3 Timescales**

It is clear that works are continuing to over-run; certain properties had been open for up to 5 months. It is suggested that a programme of 6 weeks is adequate for this type of refurbishment.

## **7.4 Complaints**

Tenants are continuing to complain about conduct of workmen, quality of work and damage to property. Many tenants in the properties inspected in the first phase are very frustrated that UH have not rectified defects and are not dealing with complaints effectively; tenants state they have complained both verbally and in writing on numerous occasions without any response.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

1. Improved clarity of specification of works and a statement of what the client and tenant will expect
2. Improved clarity of availability standards and responsibility of works team
3. Supervision and approval of works by client or representative
4. Programme for remedial works to make good outstanding defects
5. Agreement of damages to client for late works
6. Photographic survey to be carried out before and after works
7. Improved procedure to deal with complaints about pre-January 2005 properties
8. Tenants' names and phone numbers to be made readily available for future inspections
9. Resident questionnaires at handover stage to assess satisfaction level and scope for improvement